An Environment for Environmental Studies

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An Environment for Environmental Studies

By John Freund

If we think of a liberal education as one which seeks to provide human beings with a means for realizing their humanity, we must recognize immediately that our educational institutions are completely out of it. It is not just that they aren’t doing the job. They are in another ball park, playing a duller—and dirtier—game.

One of the rules of the game they are playing is that everyone must pretend that whatever is going on constitutes a liberal education. This doesn’t really fool very many people, but it introduces so many irrelevancies into any discussion of the matter that coming to any kind of conclusion becomes impossible. Since another rule has it that any change in the rules must be preceded by an exhaustive discussion of all aspects of the matter, the game goes on and on and on, in the same form that it has for a century or more. In the meantime, some of the more desperate spectators have begun ripping the stadium apart.

* * *

About a century ago John Stuart Mill remarked in his essay On Liberty that “it really is of importance, not only what men do, but also what manner of men they are that do it” (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1956, p. 72). This simple idea is a compelling one. But the form in which it is cast is interesting in its own right. There is an unusual insistence about it, as though Mill felt that the point ought to be self-evident, but that otherwise intelligent people didn’t seem to be grasping it.

I don’t know whether or not Mill was addressing academicians, but they certainly number among those who have failed to grasp the point ever since. I can add nothing to his remark to make it any more
incisive than it is, but as it continues to provide the only foundation upon which the idea of a liberal education can rest, I will repeat it, setting it off by itself so that it can glow in all its beautiful, self-contained insistence:

It really is of importance, not only what men do, but also what manner of men they are that do it.

(Mill, *On Liberty*, Chapter III)

I suppose it must be added that Mill is not necessarily placing character above action in importance. He may well—like Aristotle—place it second. Any of us, however, especially if we contemplate the varied pageant of human affairs in its totality from the dawn of time, might do the same. Such a perspective inclines one to consider the nature of the deeds done more important than the character of their doers. But that is not the point. The point is that—second or not—character does matter.

More important, however, is that to a teacher character matters most—if only because how to do something can be learned from the operation itself by anyone with a mind to learn it; whereas how to be up to what one does can only be learned in the company of other human beings. But we need not settle for an “if only.” There is a more profound reason for the primacy of character in education. It must come first, as Mill would say, because “it really is of importance.” It makes the difference, after all, between a man and a machine.

Nevertheless, American education has gone in the opposite direction. Higher education, in particular, has applied itself to teaching doing with a breath-taking zeal, bombarding a seemingly inexhaustible supply of pre-fabricated and semi-permeable youth with a seemingly endless variety of facts, techniques, skills and methodologies. The manner of men that are finally emitted from its cloudy chambers has been left to what little chance is free to operate in the ever-more-tightly structured process (considerably less than a particle in a cyclotron enjoys).

This is not to say that higher education completely disregards the manner of men it produces (if a mechanical man is a manner of man). Rather, it is to say that the who in the process of higher education is determined, by and large, by the process of lower education. Lower education, for its part, concerns itself with the who only on an *a priori* basis: it accepts and reinforces whatever racist, militaristic, technocratic, snobbish or similarly delinquent attitudes the society at large feeds to it. Thus, higher education can be seen to be the silent accessory, after the fact, to the damage the warped values of an ignorant society inflicts upon its children in the elementary and secondary schools.
In short, the apparent disregard with which higher education views all but the know-how of its students is not genuine. It is the pose necessary for the deliberate mechanization of the individual. To be sure, it is not a conscious pose, for higher education is itself mechanized. But the fact remains that our colleges and universities disregard the character of their students only out of a deep concern lest character emerge.

Now, contrary to what we might expect, the size of the institution is not a key factor in the process of mechanization. Many small, liberal arts colleges further this end as much as the giant multiversities. They merely go at it the hard way. Whereas the mega-campus can afford to be somewhat sloppy in its approach, counting on the anonymity its size induces to do much of the work of dehumanization, the mini-school must work against the odds, so to speak, and counsel and guide students into their special slots in the curriculum. The curriculum then takes over and automatically guides them into their special slots in society. The amount of "student-teacher contact" is not really relevant. Contact is no measure of human involvement; even an embrace can be mechanical. Contact for what purpose is the relevant question, and as long as the curriculum remains sacred, it is clear that human feelings will be profaned by a form of contact which seeks to isolate rather than to involve.

Any serious discussion of the future of higher education must begin with the realization that whatever comes in contact with the curricular concept is almost instantly transformed into an absurdity. The warping atmosphere of curricular considerations extends into our very thoughts. The moment we begin to reflect about education, we are subjected to whimsical limitations of which we are scarcely aware, but which are nonetheless devastating to sound thinking. It is somewhat like stumbling onto a slowly-turning merry-go-round without realizing it, when stopping to get our bearings in a strange environment.

For the curriculum is a merry-go-round—a merry-go-round in time. Not a very merry one, to be sure, but its grimness is no more paradoxical than its etymological roots in the concept of a racetrack, for nobody runs. Students don't even move; the scenery moves instead. The mechanized backdrop wheels slowly by them, performing the essential function of a racetrack in our society: selecting and ranking losers.

And just as function follows form, so form follows function in this dreary round. The business of a curriculum is the fixing of a status on everyone, a standing (literally, a stasis). Whoever or whatever accepts a place in its static environs is thereby shaped to perform the same task: grading, evaluation, ranking—a bit part, as it were, in the G.P.A.
The notion of a curriculum, consequently, paralyzes thought. It forces us to think in bits and pieces. What part of it should be altered, we tend to ask ourselves? What part should this or that field of inquiry play in a modern curriculum?

Modern curriculum! The phrase is an affront to reason. And play! How can anything play in a curriculum? There is no room for that sort of nonsense in this work-oriented Roman relic, this nightmare of the Muses. Joy, zest, laughter, love of learning—need not apply; sober gravity is the entrance requirement. Everything must accommodate itself to its stern demands. Let us look briefly at what a policy of accommodation has led to in one field, English, sometimes fancifully regarded as a kind of central pillar of the humanities.

By assuming a servant’s role, English has managed to carve herself out an empire in a vacuum. But she has developed the soul of a servant as well, the kind of servant that Strindberg or Genet portrays. Her “service” course in writing, undertaken for the good of the rest of the curriculum, has swollen her ranks to their present bloated proportions. It has also permanently alienated generations of students and processed her own outlook as thoroughly as it has the incoming freshmen. At the moment, armed with specialists, she stands ready to extend her efforts into the field of literature. Indeed, she has already made good beginnings, for the average student is coming to loathe literature nearly as much as he loathes writing.

Now, clearly, it should not be this way. Writing is a unique means of expression. It is a soul-satisfying act, profoundly related to growth and life. It is linked, in fact, to the fundamental drive common to all living things: self-realization. Though not so immediate nor so charged a medium as speech, writing can do what speech cannot. It can extend our thoughts spatially and compose them. This functional activity should not be thwarted—as it has been and is—by curricular or societal demands.

The same holds true for literature. It should not be a scholarly pond for watering the horses of instruction. Literature is an open book. If nothing else, students should be let alone more, so that they can read without ridiculously considering that they are engaging in a “discipline.”

Those who have taught writing at the college level are familiar with the effects instruction in writing at the lower levels has had. Students frankly say they dislike it because they were “never any good at it.” This is not so strange a response to the impersonal and punitive means by which they were introduced to this major form of self-expression. One wonders, consequently, what will happen to sex when it enters the curriculum in the lower grades. If those responsible for the teaching of writing are given sufficient authority, we need not wonder. We may confidently look forward to a technical presentation
of the subject in such wearisome detail, coupled with such severe testing and grading, that vast numbers of future graduates will voluntarily renounce sexuality, doggedly asserting that they were "never any good at it."

Before it does any more harm we must abandon the entire concept of the curriculum. If it ever made any sense, it doesn't any longer.

The true role of education is to be the educator of the society in which it exists. This is its true service to society. It is false to itself and to society when it abdicates its true role to play lackey to societal bidding. Yet this is what education has done. It has accepted an a priori scheme of things from its social environment and sheltered it from the empirical facts that would otherwise expose its inadequacies.

In a stable society, possessed of a set of values so intimately related to its life that they are reflected in its actions, it is both right and sensible for education to concentrate its major efforts upon the young, for the young are ignorant of the society in which they must live and which they will come to constitute. It is also possible that in a complex society this effort might be most effectively carried out by formalizing the process: setting the young to a course of study which almost automatically leads them to an understanding of their society and its values. We do not live, however, in a stable society; we live in a very unstable one.

Not only unstable, but sick. In fact, it has been called sick so often by so many that, like King Lear, it is ready to kill its physician "and the fee bestow upon the foul disease." We who live in the society and in its educational system are not sure that we know its actual values. We can feel, however, that whatever the values are, they are neither right nor sensible, and although there is room for a good deal of thought about how education ought to set about ministering to society at this late date, clearly it ought not to be endeavoring to adjust the young to its morbid culture.

That education continues to conceive of its role in these terms is a sign of its own psychic illness, the illness it contracted when it chose not to be true to itself, and which will destroy it unless it chooses again to be what it ought to be.

** * * * *

Jane Austen neatly expresses an aesthetic standard for architecture in a thought which flashes into the mind of Emma Woodhouse while she is viewingKnightley’s house:

—It was just what it ought to be, and it looked what it was—


In this observation Emma closes the triangle of the *actual*, the *ideal* and the *image* in upon itself until it becomes a point. For her, and
we may assume for her author, this tendency toward identity of “what is,” “what ought to be” and “what appears” represents a measure of fitness in more than houses.

We, too, may see in it more than an aesthetic standard. The approximation of identity among these three aspects of reality represents a measure of sanity and health. Indeed, I would suggest that we may go further and consider it a measure of what may be called “moral stability” and apply it to a wide variety of phenomena that are not ordinarily considered in a moral light.

For example, it seems applicable to scientific endeavors. J. Bronowski and Bruce Mazlish, in *The Western Intellectual Tradition* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), have sought to present an integrated account of the intellectual history of Western man from Leonardo Da Vinci to Hegel by employing several rather unusual means. One particularly striking tactic, which amounts to an organizing feature of the book, is to focus throughout upon the interplay of the empirical and rational methods in both the natural and human sciences.

Briefly, the empirical is the method of observation and experiment, a concern with “what is”; the rational is the speculative approach of reasoning from postulates, a concern with “what ought to be.” Here is how the authors put the matter:

> On the one hand, the conviction that nature is lawful has stimulated men to keep a close watch on natural phenomena, to observe and to experiment, in order to see in what manner she repeats herself—to find, practically, the pattern of her consistency. And on the other hand, it has stimulated men to think behind the practical pattern, to analyze and to reason, in order to find its simple and rational organization—in order to find intelligible laws. The combination of the empirical and the rational makes up the scientific method.

(Bronowski and Mazlish, *The Western Intellectual Tradition*, p. 492)

The authors go on to point out that whenever one mode is fostered at the expense of the other, the resulting imbalance retards progress. Thus, the one-sided influence of the Cartesian method of rational inquiry set French science back for over a century. On the other hand, England, during nearly the same period, tended to undervalue rational inquiry, and a practical bias developed from the unrestrained empirical approach. Consequently, “the technical achievements of men of the stamp of James Watt and Benjamin Franklin were too easily detached from their human and ethical context, and allowed to proliferate into the smug inhumanity of early industrial society” (p. 493).

It should be clear from even such brief excerpts as these that the authors are avoiding the simple-minded identifications that one often hears in discussions of science. Science is not being equated with

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empiricism, for example, nor even with the natural sciences, for that matter. "What is" and "what ought to be," furthermore, take on additional significance as it emerges that their interaction is of greater importance than either one separately. The authors' discussion of Machiavelli is particularly interesting in this regard.

It is interesting to watch Bronowski and Mazlish set the stage for their investigation of Machiavelli. They begin by singling out for special attention Burckhardt's notion that the city-state of the Italian Renaissance became a work of art (p. 20). Later they cite Charles Singleton's article, "The Perspective of Art" (The Kenyon Review, Spring, 1953), to suggest that Machiavelli's "amoral" approach may well have stemmed from his removal of political activity from the medieval category of "doing" and his placing it into the category of "making," that is, into the company of the arts, where the artist was felt to be free from moral imperatives with respect to what he made (p. 39).

This notion is intriguing in a complex way. At first sight, it suggests that the popular fear of the "mad scientist" has been misplaced; it is the "mad artist"—in whatever disguise he may be wearing—that we ought to fear. On closer examination, however, we are struck by the inadequate view of morality that the medieval attitude to the arts implied, for it equates morality with "what ought to be," and suggests that the artist may deal with his material however he pleases.

It is closer to the truth of the artistic act, I think, to say that the artist, like the scientist, succeeds by achieving the proper interplay between "what is" and "what ought to be": that is, between the intrinsic properties of his materials (the empirical facts of his medium) and the properties of his embracing concept (the rational, untested organization he seeks to impose). This is not to suggest that the artist must always achieve a quantitative balance between the two, any more than the scientist must. It is only to say of art what Bronowski and Mazlish say of science: achievement is only realized from the interaction of the two, and bad art, like bad science, results from disregarding either.

It is apparent, is it not, that the thought which Emma Woodhouse conceived upon looking at Knightley's house was her own as much as it was Jane Austen's. If we insist that Jane Austen could have forced some contradictory notion onto the page at that point, we must also concede that she would have thereby damaged her own conception as much as Emma's integrity to herself. By the same means, we can detect the nature of Machiavelli's failure. It is what Bronowski and Mazlish are getting at when they ascribe his "profound error" to the fact that "he did not sufficiently reckon with the moral factor in politics," and say, consequently, that 'his 'science' was faulty" (p. 40). They are operating, it appears, from the relatively sophisticated
assumption that the scientific method, far from inducing a blindness to moral considerations, provides the only means of attending to what is morally relevant.

Perhaps the matter will be clearer if we examine it from a slightly different point of view. Machiavelli, as the authors point out, is widely identified with introducing the empirical approach into political study. Just as the artists of his time were, he was concerned with “what to exclude” and chose to exclude morality, or, in the authors’ terms, “what should be” in order to focus upon “what is” (p. 31). Nevertheless, he also attempted to employ the rational approach (the reason, incidentally, that the authors consider him to be the first, real political “scientist”) and encountered difficulties. Here is the account Bronowski and Mazlish give of his problems with the double approach:

Machiavelli’s rationalism, however, collided with the empirical part of his method. His desire to state general rules and principles came into conflict with his attempt to pay attention only to “what was.” He thought the facts confirmed his a priori postulates, but he neither drew his postulates from the facts nor tested the facts which supposedly tested the postulates. We see this in his use of Livy. Machiavelli used Livy, constantly, without any real attempt ever to check his historical “facts”; indeed, Machiavelli simply used the ancient histories as the “given.” Thus he saw, not “what was,” but what his postulates told him would be there. His speculative theory prevented him from looking closely at the facts, and the erroneous facts made a shaky foundation for his science.

(Bronowski and Mazlish, The Western Intellectual Tradition, p. 33)

Do we not have here something essentially analogous to the struggle of an artist to harmonize his concept and his materials as he endeavors to pioneer a new mode of expression? Machiavelli’s approaches “collided” rather than interpenetrated. Similarly, an artist is accustomed to experiencing a jarring sensation when his ideas do not fuse with his materials. In both cases, if there has been a miscalculation, collisions occurring in the process of composition signal the fact, collisions which, taken as a whole, are the third point in Emma’s triangle: the image. For the image is no more nor less than the jarring which accompanies the separation of “what is” and “what ought to be” or, put in other terms, the stresses set up by the failure of the empirical and the rational to mesh and support each other. And it seems reasonable to conclude that the true artist and the true scientist share in the trait of sensitivity, sensitivity to the collisions between “what is” and “what ought to be” that drive the two apart.

Machiavelli’s double approach led to a double failure. Both his empirical and his rational methods failed because they failed to
interact. It was not that Machiavelli was too much the realist (whatever *that* may mean); it was that he was a bad scientist—or artist—it comes to the same thing. The failure is a moral one in either case: it is the failure to be sensitive to the environment one seeks to create or understand—ultimately, a failure of character. It really is of importance.

* * * *

Emma’s triangle provides a measure of the degree to which moral considerations are being overlooked in the manipulations of an environment, whether that environment is made up of people, things or ideas. If the triangle is large, something is amiss; if it is small, our approach is morally sound.

Nevertheless, Emma’s vision of Knightley’s house as morally sound was not true to the age in which she lived. It was a dream vision, true only in the closed, sheltered environment into which her creator had put her, an environment which was itself a dream of some golden age in the past. England at the beginning of the 19th century was quite a different thing.

Leonardo Da Vinci, who ushered in the modern age, gave us the enigmatic smile of the Mona Lisa and the anguished cry that runs through his later notebooks, “Tell me if anything at all was done . . .” (Bronowski and Mazlish, *The Western Intellectual Tradition*, p. 16). Three hundred years later a great deal was being done, but the Mona Lisa’s smile had become the grin of the Cheshire Cat.

Lewis Carroll’s Alice gives us a truer picture of the 19th century environment than does Jane Austen’s Emma. For Alice, as she struggles through the wonderland of Victorian reality, Emma’s triangle has stretched to nearly infinite proportions. Everything, herself included, seems “wrong from beginning to end,” as the Caterpillar puts it (Lewis Carroll, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, New York: The Modern Library, 1924, p. 69). Everything is just what it oughtn’t to be and looks to be something else again.

Everything is arbitrary in her environment, and whatever direction she goes, she encounters madness: “Would you tell me, please,” she asks the Cheshire Cat at one point, “which way I ought go from here?”

“That depends a good deal on where you want to get,” said the Cat.
“I don’t much care where—” said Alice.
“Then it doesn’t matter which way you go,” said the Cat.
“—so long as I get *somewhere*,” Alice added as an explanation.
“Oh, you’re sure to do that,” said the Cat, “if you only walk long enough.”

(Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland*, p. 86)

It is clear that Alice is essentially responsible for the kind of advice
she receives. She is purposeless, and her environment simply reflects her own image to her. When she chooses, finally, to be herself, she sees her environment more accurately and discovers the way out. It is simply that, Out.

Nineteenth century mathematicians were wandering in a similar wonderland, the wonderland of the purely rational. They failed to see that logic has an empirical origin, *a priori*, as Nathan Court points out in *Mathematics in Fun and in Earnest* (New York: The New American Library, 1961, p. 60), and they gloried in the limitless possibilities which freedom from all empirical restraint seemed to offer. Starting with whatever postulates they chose, they could go wherever they liked—if only they could prove that their postulates were free from internal contradictions *a priori* (p. 23).

In the 1930's Kurt Godel and others proved the reverse of this: *a priori* knowledge of the internal consistency of one's postulates can never be attained, a hard pill to swallow. Bronowski, in “The Logic of the Mind,” *American Scientist*, March, 1966, p. 3), refers to the several proofs as “unwelcome” and “unpleasant.” No doubt they were, at first, for they amounted to a moral reproof to the free-wheeling *hubris* of postulational mathematics. As Nathan Court, quoting Georges Bouligand, makes clear, there was something essentially wrong about the whole dream in the first place:

To find within a body of doctrine G a proof that G is consistent is impossible, for to accept the validity of such a proof is to concede to a part of G a special privilege: an abusive procedure, if the coherence of G as a whole is in doubt.

(Court, *Mathematics in Fun and in Earnest*, p. 50)

The Cheshire Cat, for all his madness, was right: if you go far enough in any direction—even in the environment of the purely rational—you will get somewhere, even if it is only out. It is a question of persistency and honesty.

The rational, after all, is an environment, for an environment is simply what surrounds something, what something is imbedded in. We are accustomed to think of the empirical as imbedded in the rational—“what is” cradled in “what ought to be.” But as we have just noticed, the rational arises in some profound way from the empirical. Perhaps this is the end of the line. Perhaps all that can finally be said is that if we wish to come to grips with the truth of nature and ourselves, we can do no more than involve ourselves—sensitively—in the complex interaction of these two environments.

Nevertheless, it is instructive to note some wheels within the wheels. The recent history of mathematics makes clear that the rational recapitulates within itself the interaction it is engaged in, as a whole, with the physical world of empirical reality. Heinrich Tietze, in
Famous Problems of Mathematics (Baltimore: The Graylock Press, 1965, pp. 304-26), devotes considerable attention to distinguishing the “inner” properties of a surface from those which “imbed” it in another dimension. Curvature, for example, is an “imbedding property,” for it can be detected only by erecting perpendiculars to the surface, probes, as it were, into another dimension (p. 317). The new dimension, of course, defines a new environment which gives us a new perspective of the surface: namely, curvature. On the other hand, measurements may be carried out on the surface itself, “empirical” measurements, as it were, to find out its “inner properties”: to find out what the surface will tell us all by itself about itself.

As Tietze points out, the significant thing is that for every distinct, two-dimensional surface “there is a curved surface imbedded in three-dimensional Euclidean space, on which measurements agree with the corresponding non-Euclidean formulas” (p. 318). Yet curvature must not be confused with the measurements conducted entirely on a surface, for curvature always implies a penetration into a new dimension, and it can distinguish certain important features of a surface which measurements conducted entirely on the surface cannot. Although surface measurements alone, for example, can distinguish a sphere from a plane, they cannot distinguish a plane from a cone (p. 321). They are but mad north-northwest.

My point in introducing this highly technical matter is to emphasize how difficult it sometimes is to observe the crucial distinction between two, quite different environments. Tietze himself went to the lengths he did in discussing the subject of “space curvature” because he felt that the inaccurate use of the term “curvature” in that context accounted for the confusion that most people experienced with the concept (p. 305).

Furthermore, I wish to emphasize that wherever one turns he sees the necessity of considering both the empirical characteristics of his environment, which define his state in one important way, and the rational concerns, which define it in another important way. To be relatively blind to either is to increase the likelihood of inducing further blindness, and thus to increase the pain that accompanies the inevitable collision with reality.

Today, many of our environments have become so polluted that they threaten to become positively lethal. Consequently, we have begun to notice them and to strike back with a rash of environmental studies of every environment in sight, whether natural, social or man-made. We live, we might almost say, in an environment of environmental studies. Unfortunately, this environment also is susceptible to pollution. In fact, it may already be polluted by the manipulative character of many of the investigations. Like Oedipus (though with far less excuse), we are failing to take sufficient regard of the fact
that we may be the pollutant we are seeking to discover and banish.

By ignoring the moral dimension of our actions, we have created an intellectual environment, which by its artificially stunted nature can only confirm us further in our delusion—as long as we choose to remain in it. But we need not remain in it. Signals from other, more open environments still reach our ears. Even the “hardest” of our sciences reminds us that science as a whole is not free of value judgments. This long-evident fact is put well by Victor Guillemin in *The Story of Quantum Mechanics* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1968, p. 263):

> The uniformities of nature do not lie open for inspection. They must be framed somehow out of the welter of observed complexities. And this involves value judgments which cannot be made according to set rules of scientific procedure. Ever since the scholastic philosopher William of Ockham (1270-1347) proposed the principle of “Ockham’s razor,” the shearing away of non-essentials, *simplicity* has been urged as a criterion in the formation of concepts and laws. Scientists have preferred certain forms of laws for other nonscientific reasons: because they are “elegant” or “beautiful.”

(Guillemin, *The Story of Quantum Mechanics*, p. 263)

By blinding ourselves to this manifest fact, we have, as a society, mechanized ourselves to the point of almost complete insensitivity; and it is this, I believe, which accounts for the popular fear of the machine “taking over.” The fear of a machine possessed of human faculties is only the inverted fantasy of our own reality. Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* ushered in a long line of such fantasies. But *we* are the Frankenstein monster, for we are machine-like men whose bad dreams are of manlike machines.

A machine, after all, is simply a system of parts that do not constitute a whole capable of endowing the system with a purpose. Unless they are imbedded in an environment of human intention, our machines are senseless, either ridiculous or sinister, depending upon what they collide with. Similarly, if man withdraws from the moral environment in which his humanity is embedded, he loses his humanity and becomes ridiculous and sinister by turns.

Nothing is simultaneously so ridiculous and sinister as the mechanized environment of formal education in which we are all trapped. Instead of cradling attempts to understand our threatening environments by providing an appropriate moral atmosphere, it mimics the behavior which it feels society expects of it, and in doing so, deceives all those it embraces. It is playing a self-important role so that it can avoid coming in real contact with itself or others.

Both its practice and theory betray it. Its “ideal” in teaching points as clearly to what is wrong as does what usually goes on in the class-
rooms. The "good teacher is felt to be one who makes learning exciting, who generates excitement in his students. He is expected to be perpetually animated and to display enthusiasm over each aspect of his course. The student, in turn, expects this for his money and is indignant when he does not get it.

Both the teacher and the student are acting out a lie. Learning is exciting in itself. It is not served by those who feel it must be made exciting by an artificial environment.

In its internal workings, higher education has similarly routiniz ed its activities. It no longer seriously deliberates over educational policy; it only goes through the exhausting motions. As Harold Taylor points out, in Students Without Teachers (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1969, p. 139), an educational policy committee usually operates "without benefit of either empirical research or philosophical analysis of its own premises, isolated from the judgments and ideas of informed students and from the reality of educational needs in the society outside the university."

The withdrawal from life can go no further.

* * * *

About fifteen years ago Dr. Harold Greenwald undertook a social and psychological study of call girls. He presented what he discovered in The Call Girl (New York: Ballantine Books, 1958). Undoubtedly, some superficial details of what he found have changed since then. His basic findings, I suspect, have not. Some seem noteworthy.

The call girl is "the aristocrat of prostitution" (p. 9). She earns in the neighborhood of $20,000 a year in "the life" or "the racket," as she refers to her profession. Nevertheless, she is contemptuous of money—and of sex. The majority of the girls interviewed disliked sex, and half were totally frigid (pp. 134-35).

The call girl tends to have a confused sense of self and of reality (p. 114), and her relationship with her client is a mechanical one. Nevertheless, her simulation of sexual passion is excellent, and her client feels he is getting the "real thing." Were she less mechanized, she could not pretend so well.

The pretense is not all one-sided, however. There is mutual self-deceit (pp. 164-74). The central irony in "the trick," as the call girl refers to the sexual contact (p. 25), is that her client is in a way her mirror-image. Each is often protecting an inadequate self-image and by so doing, protecting the other's. It is a mutually destructive relationship.

Most call girls wish to get out of "the life." Few succeed, however. Nevertheless, at the core of her being, the call girl wants really to live. A barrier is the reluctance to face facts:

Beverly, when she interviewed Irene, asked her about the racket, and Irene answered: "I wouldn't have the vaguest idea, never
having been in the racket.” Beverly then told her: “Irene, let’s face the facts. If you go to a man’s hotel room and have sex with a man for money, if that doesn’t make you a whore, please straighten me out!”

(Greenwald, The Call Girl, p. 104)

Beverly, who had been in the racket for sixteen years, succeeded in getting out. She faced a fact.
A call girl is a whore.